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General Assembly

Official Records

Disarmament Commission

216th Meeting
Tuesday, 13 May 1997, 11 a.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Garcia ..... (Colombia)

The meeting was called to order at 11.05 a.m.

Reports by Chairmen of Working Groups

The Chairman (*interpretation from Spanish*): We are approaching the final stage of the 1997 substantive session. At this, our last meeting, we will begin with the adoption of reports of the subsidiary bodies on the various agenda items (A/CN.10/1997/CRP.3-5), and then proceed to agenda item 7 for the consideration and adoption of the draft report of the Commission (A/CN.10/1997/CRP.2). These documents have been circulated in all official languages. In accordance with our agreed working timetable, we shall then hear concluding statements by delegations.

To start the process of the consideration and adoption of the reports of the subsidiary bodies on individual agenda items, I shall call on the Chairman of each Working Group to introduce the report of his Group.

I call first on the Chairman of Working Group I, on agenda item 4, "Establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned", to introduce the report (A/CN.10/1997/CRP.3) of that Working Group.

Mr. Mesdoua (Algeria), Chairman of Working Group I (*interpretation from French*): I have the honour to introduce the report of Working Group I, contained in document A/CN.10/1997/CRP.3. The Working Group, which considered agenda item 4, "Establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned", held 10 meetings between 24 April and 13 May 1997. As Chairman of the Working Group I also held informal consultations during that time.

At its first meeting, on 24 April, the Group decided to devote three meetings to its general debate, and to structure its exchange of views on the basis of three of the elements that the Chairman had proposed for the document. It was decided that, this year at least, the exchange of views would focus on the following elements: general overview; scope; and principles and objectives. It was also proposed and decided that an element on institutional arrangements could be included in the structure of the document. Moreover, the Group felt that it was premature at this stage to begin any discussion of recommendations and guidelines.

On that generally accepted basis the Group began its programme of work. Given the importance of the item — as of all the items on the Commission's agenda this year — the Chairman of the Working Group asked delegations to submit written contributions. Twelve working documents were submitted: these will serve as a conceptual basis for our understanding of this item in future sessions.

The Chairman prepared and proposed to the Group a document setting out his personal views on the item. All these texts — the 12 submitted by delegations and the one submitted by the Chairman — will be most useful and valuable for all delegations in the coming year. Unquestionably, this is a promising beginning and constitutes tangible results; for this we have the delegations themselves to thank.

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This record contains the original texts of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one week of the date of publication*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

In that connection, I take this opportunity to thank all the delegations which during our deliberations endeavoured to help me in the difficult but fascinating task of serving the Disarmament Commission. Their comments, proposals and recommendations have also enabled me to improve the Chairman's document. I hope that these results — and, above all, the spirit and atmosphere that prevailed in our work this year — will set an example for future sessions.

If positive results have been obtained, you, Mr. Chairman, are in large part responsible for them. I must therefore tell you how grateful I am for your constant and tireless support during these weeks. Despite a very full schedule your words of encouragement and your constant presence in the three groups — especially at difficult times, such as the single moment when I doubt the usefulness not of the exercise, but of its continuation — made it possible to overcome the difficulties and finally to arrive at the results we have today. I sincerely thank you.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the Secretary of Working Group I, Mr. Timur Alasaniya, and to the members of the Secretariat for their valuable assistance in this task.

The Chairman (*interpretation from Spanish*): I invite delegates to make comments on the report introduced by the Chairman of Working Group I.

Mr. Abou-Hadid (Syrian Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I would like to thank you, Mr. Chairman, and the Chairman of Working Group I for the successful efforts made in the work of our Working Group on agenda item 4, entitled "Establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned".

I would like to refer briefly to the translation into Arabic of document A/CN.10/1997/CRP.3, the report of Working Group I. In paragraph 11 the translation of "not obligatory" is incorrect. The Arabic version must be in conformity with the English. I hope that this will be reflected in the records.

With respect to the document introduced by the Chairman of the Working Group, in paragraph six, on page seven, which involves entry into force, there are square brackets even in the English version. I would like to request an explanation for those square brackets.

In chapter heading IV of the annex to the document the term "institutional arrangements" is also in square brackets. My delegation would also like to have that explained.

The Chairman (*interpretation from Spanish*): I call on the Chairman of Working Group I.

Mr. Mesdoua (Algeria) Chairman of Working Group I (*interpretation from French*): In response to the questions posed by the Syrian delegation, I would just like to make it clear that, from the outset, everything on which a decision had not been made regarding reflection in the document was to be dealt with this way. In the document adopted by the Working Group, chapter heading IV, on institutional arrangements, has square brackets. This element was proposed by a delegation and was retained by the Working Group, but was not discussed. It was decided from the beginning that it would be kept. Chapter heading III on page 8, which is entitled "Principles", was also left in square brackets because this chapter, like the chapter on institutional arrangements, was not agreed on by the Working Group so that the Chairman could include it in the report.

I do not know if I have responded to the concerns of the Syrian delegation. However, it was the intention of the Chairman of the Working Group from the beginning, as it is now, to have those elements in square brackets.

Mr. Abou-Hadid (Syrian Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I apologize for speaking once more. We hope that a new procedure will be introduced in our work in the next session so that the Chairman of the Working Group will present his document early enough so that it will not constitute a sort of fait accompli. Other Working Groups have studied documents in detail and thoroughly. We therefore hope that the Chairman of the Working Group will consider and follow such a procedure at the next session.

The Chairman (*interpretation from Spanish*): I call on the Chairman of Working Group I.

Mr. Mesdoua (Algeria) Chairman of Working Group I (*interpretation from French*): I would like to thank the Syrian delegation for his comments. I would also like to say to him that these comments should have been made on Friday, when we decided to adopt this report.

Ms. Enkhtsetseg (Mongolia): My delegation would also like to express briefly its gratitude to the Chairman of Working Group I, Mr. Mesdoua of Algeria, for his

able guidance, and also to thank all the other delegations that participated actively to finalize the report of Working Group I.

My delegation believes that the discussion of the concept of the single-State nuclear-weapon-free zones has been initiated at this substantive session of the Disarmament Commission. We hope that it will be discussed in a more focused fashion at the next session of the Disarmament Commission.

The Chairman (*interpretation from Spanish*): There are no further requests to speak. If there are no further comments I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt the report of Working Group I on agenda item 4, as contained in document A/CN.10/1997/CRP.3.

The report was adopted.

The Chairman (*interpretation from Spanish*): Now let us turn to the report of Working Group II on agenda item 5, entitled "Fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament", as contained in document A/CN.10/1997/CRP.4*. I call on the Chairman of that Working Group, Mr. Sudjadnan Parnohadiningrat, the representative of Indonesia, to introduce the report of Working Group II.

Mr. Parnohadiningrat (Indonesia) Chairman of Working Group II: It is my great pleasure to introduce to the Disarmament Commission the report of Working Group II under agenda item 5, entitled "Fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament". The report is contained in document A/CN.10/1997/CRP.4*.

As the Commission knows, the Disarmament Commission began working on this subject last May under the able chairmanship of Ambassador Erdenechuluun of Mongolia. In December, by resolution 51/45 C, the General Assembly decided to convene the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, subject to the emergence of consensus on its objectives and agenda. And the Commission, at its organizational meeting that month, decided to establish Working Group II to continue dealing with these questions at its 1997 substantive session.

The Working Group held 12 meetings in the period between 28 April and 9 May. The first three of these were devoted to the general exchange of views. In addition, throughout the session I conducted informal consultations with delegations on specific aspects of the work of particular concern to them.

The group took as a basis for its work a non-paper that I submitted. This non-paper served to structure the group's deliberations under the headings: first, elements of understandings regarding the convening of the fourth special session; secondly, elements for the objectives of the special session; thirdly, issues to be taken up at the special session; and, fourthly, preparatory process. Subsequently, revisions were issued. They drew upon the suggestions made by various delegations. A number of working papers were issued by delegations and groups of delegations in an attempt to clarify positions and find common ground.

As was acknowledged from the very beginning, there were fundamental differences of approach among delegations regarding the convening of the special session. In the end, in spite of strenuous effort on the part of all, it was not possible to bridge the gap. Although the group did not succeed in reaching consensus on the objectives and agenda, there was a general feeling that some progress was made.

As the Commission will see in paragraph 8 of the report, the Working Group decided to recommend to the Commission that, at its 1998 substantive session, it continue its consideration of the item on the fourth special session. The Working Group also decided, without prejudice to the position of any delegation, to annex to its report the paper I presented.

In closing, I would like to thank all delegations for the constructive spirit in which they carried out these sensitive deliberations and to express my gratitude to those who, through their tireless individual contributions, strove to move our work forward. At this point I would also like to extend to you, Mr. Chairman, my most sincere thanks for your encouragement, your support and cooperation and your guidance. I would also like to thank all members of the Bureau for the very valuable cooperation they extended to me during my tenure as Chairman of this Working Group. I would also like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to staff of the Centre for Disarmament Affairs, in particular Mr. Mohammad Sattar and Ms. Carolyn Cooper, who worked very closely with the group. I would also like to express my thanks to the interpreters and the conference officers, who have given their valuable assistance to the group in our endeavours.

The Chairman (*interpretation from Spanish*): I invite representatives to make comments on the report that has just been introduced.

As I do not see anyone asking to speak, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt the report of Working Group II on agenda item 5, as contained in document A/CN.10/1997/CRP.4*.

The report was adopted.

The Chairman (*interpretation from Spanish*): Let us now turn to the report of Working Group III on agenda item 6, entitled "Guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N", as contained in document A/CN.10/1997/CRP.5.

I call on the Chairman of Working Group III, the representative of Ireland, Mr. Michael Hoey, to introduce the report of that Working Group.

Mr. Hoey (Ireland) Chairman of Working Group III: Allow me if I may, on behalf of my delegation, to begin by expressing my sympathy to the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the terrible earthquake which struck Iran two days ago. The terrible loss of life is something which is really appalling, and I would like to extend my sympathy.

I have the honour to introduce to the Disarmament Commission the report of Working Group III under agenda item 6, entitled "Guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N". The report, as the Chairman reminded us, is contained in document A/CN.10/1997/CRP.5.

The Working Group held 10 meetings between 23 April and 8 May, during which time seven working papers were submitted by delegations.

Following a general exchange of views, the Working Group began consideration of a Chairman's non-paper, to which many helpful and useful amendments were suggested. At its last meeting, on 8 May, the Working Group completed its consideration of the Chairman's paper, and the report of the Working Group records that it enjoyed support as a contribution for the elaboration of future guidelines. At the same time, the Working Group also noted that some of the elements contained in the Chairman's paper required further elaboration and refinement. As is the practice in the Disarmament Commission, the Chairman's paper is annexed to the report, without prejudice to the positions of delegations.

I should like to take this opportunity to express my deep appreciation and gratitude to all delegations that participated so actively and constructively in this, the first year of our deliberations on this important item. Our work was conducted in an excellent atmosphere in which many issues relevant to the agenda item in all its aspects were raised. When differences of emphasis emerged, exchanges between delegations were always conducted with good humour and in a spirit of mutual respect for the views expressed.

Our debates were particularly enriched by the contribution of delegations that had recent experience of post-conflict situations and of practical disarmament measures that were undertaken to help consolidate peace. Their views were, in my opinion, unique and invaluable and served to remind us of the very real problems which we were addressing. At the same time, as the title of our Working Group requires, we turned our attention to the regional and global aspects of conventional arms control. We were reminded, in particular, of the enormous importance of reinforcing our efforts to combat the illicit arms trade which, as the Chairman's paper notes, continues to have disproportionately large effects on the internal security and socio-economic development of affected States.

It would be my hope that the work of the past three weeks, some of which is reflected in the Chairman's paper, will provide a constructive and balanced basis on which to continue work at next year's session. The valuable papers submitted by individual delegations are a source of ideas and principles which must be analyzed and drawn upon at next year's session.

I am pleased to inform the Committee that, at its 10th meeting on 8 May, Working Group III considered and adopted its report by consensus.

I should like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the Secretariat for all their assistance. In particular, I should like to express my gratitude to Ms. Cheryl Stoute for the efficient manner in which she organized our meetings and to thank her for her inimitable ability to sneeze just at the right moment, thereby reminding me to move on to the next issue. I should also like to thank the interpreters and conference officers for their demonstrated professionalism and cooperation.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, allow me to express my thanks to you for your guidance, encouragement, nerve-steadying skills, humour and wise counsel. Although I am not an Englishman — in fact my mother is Scottish, but that is another story — I hope I may be allowed to quote from Shakespeare:

> "Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them." (*William Shakespeare*, Twelfth Night, *II, v, 159*)

In the context of your last minute elevation to the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission, I can think of no quotation more appropriate for you. Thank you.

In conclusion, I have the honour to submit the report of Working Group III to the Disarmament Commission for its consideration and approval.

The Chairman (*interpretation from Spanish*): If there are no comments, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt the report of Working Group III on agenda item 6, as contained in document A/CN.10/1997/CRP.5.

The report was adopted.

The Chairman (*interpretation from Spanish*): Having adopted all the reports of the subsidiary bodies of the Commission, I would like most sincerely to thank the Chairmen of the three Working Groups for their dedication and professionalism. The Commission is deeply indebted to them for their leadership in guiding the deliberations of the Working Groups on very complex issues.

Report of the Disarmament Commission to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session

The Chairman (*interpretation from Spanish*): We will now begin our consideration of the draft report of the Disarmament Commission, as contained in document A/CN.10/1997/CRP.2. I have the pleasure of calling on the Rapporteur of the Commission, the representative of Australia, to introduce the draft report.

Ms. Hamilton (Australia), Rapporteur of the Disarmament Commission: It is my honour and pleasure to introduce to the Disarmament Commission the draft report of the Commission on its current session, as contained in document A/CN.10/1997/CRP.2.

In conformity with previous practice, the draft report contains four chapters: "Introduction", "Organization and work of the 1997 substantive session", "Documentation" and "Conclusions and recommendations".

As in previous years, the document presents a factual description of the Commission's work and proceedings during the session. With regard to the substantive parts of the work done by the subsidiary bodies of the Commission, chapter IV will contain the reports of the three Working Groups which have just been adopted by the Commission. Those three reports will be automatically incorporated into the draft report of the Commission.

It is my opinion that the Disarmament Commission has worked very productively this year. We have made an energetic start on two important and, at the same time, contentious agenda items: "Establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned" and "Guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N". The discussions on a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament helped to identify some of the obstacles which need to be overcome in order to achieve consensus on that item.

I wish to take this opportunity to extend my heartfelt thanks to the members of the Secretariat for the valuable assistance and cooperation they provided to me in the preparation of the draft report of the Commission. In particular, I wish to express my sincere gratitude to Mr. Prvoslav Davinic, Director of the Centre for Disarmament Affairs, and to Ms. Cheryl Stoute, Secretary of the Commission, and her colleagues.

Finally, Sir, I wish to say that it has been a great honour and privilege for me to have served on the Bureau under your distinguished and effective leadership and that of the Chairmen of the three Working Groups, who so ably guided the deliberations of the subsidiary bodies of the Commission during this session.

With this brief introduction, I now recommend that the Commission adopt its draft report, as contained in document A/CN.10/1997/CRP.2.

The Chairman (*interpretation from Spanish*): We shall now consider the draft report of the Commission, chapter by chapter.

If there are no comments on chapter I, "Introduction", paragraphs 1 and 2, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt those paragraphs.

Paragraphs 1 and 2 were adopted.

The Chairman (*interpretation from Spanish*): We turn next to chapter II, "Organization and work of the 1997 substantive session", paragraphs 3 to 12. Are there any comments?

Mr. Rider (New Zealand): I should just like to point out a very small factual error in paragraph 10, which notes that Working Group III met from 25 April to 8 May. The report of that Working Group gives the dates as 23 April to 8 May. Somewhere there is a small typographical error, which I am sure the Secretariat would want to correct.

The Chairman (*interpretation from Spanish*): I thank the representative of New Zealand for his comment. Due note has been taken that a correction needs to be made.

Mr. Abou-Hadid (Syrian Arab Republic): I, too, should like to point out a typographical error, concerning chapter III. A reference to Lebanon is missing from paragraph 25. The working paper was presented by two countries: Syria and Lebanon. That correction must be made.

The Chairman (*interpretation from Spanish*): I thank the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic for his comment on chapter III. We shall first adopt chapter II, as orally corrected. We will then move on to chapter III, bearing in mind the change suggested by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

If there are no further comments on chapter II, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt paragraphs 3 to 12, as orally corrected.

Paragraphs 3 to 12, as orally corrected, were adopted.

The Chairman (*interpretation from Spanish*): We shall now move on to chapter III, "Documentation", paragraphs 13 to 40. The representative of the Syrian Arab Republic made a comment on this chapter, of which the Secretariat has taken due note. Are there any further comments?

Mr. Zaluar (Brazil): There seems to be a note missing. Paragraph 28 refers to note 7, but the notes stop at number 6. Is there such a note? Perhaps that reference to note 7 should be deleted.

The Chairman (*interpretation from Spanish*): It is true that on the last page of the English text, footnote number 7 does not appear. It does appear in Spanish. The correction will be made.

If there are no further comments on chapter III, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt paragraphs 13 to 40, as orally corrected.

Paragraphs 13 to 40, as orally corrected, were adopted.

The Chairman (*interpretation from Spanish*): We turn next to chapter IV, "Conclusions and recommendations", paragraphs 41 to 45. Are there any comments on this chapter?

Mr. Richier (France) (*interpretation from French*): Paragraph 42 of the French text refers to "the Committee"; it should read, "the Commission".

The Chairman (*interpretation from Spanish*): A note has been made of that error, and the correction will be made to the French text.

If there are no further comments on chapter IV, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt paragraphs 41 to 45, as orally corrected.

Paragraphs 41 to 45, as orally corrected, were adopted.

The Chairman (*interpretation from Spanish*): Now that all paragraphs of the draft report have been adopted, I should like to take up the draft report of the Commission as a whole, with all reports of the subsidiary bodies inserted therein.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Commission to adopt the draft report of the Commission as a whole, as contained in document A/CN.10/1997/CRP.2, as orally corrected?

The draft report, as orally corrected, was adopted.

Concluding statements

Ms. Hamilton (Australia): I now have my other hat on. It is the usual practice of the Australian delegation to

make a general statement at the conclusion of the substantive session of the Disarmament Commission, rather than during the general debate at the beginning of the session. I will therefore now make some remarks on behalf of my own delegation.

Last year at this time my delegation had cause to be disturbed by the failure of the Commission to agree to include in its agenda an item on nuclear-weapon-free zones, and it welcomed the steps taken by our Chairman at the time to ensure that, this year, we would agree on a manageable and constructive agenda well in advance of the substantive session. I wish to pay tribute to the work of Ambassador Wisnumurti and Mr. Sudjadnan Parnohadiningrat in helping us agree on a full and challenging agenda for 1997.

We would like to thank the Chairman of Working Group I, Mr. Abelkader Mesdoua, for his constructive and patient work with regard to nuclear-weapon-free zones. As is always the case, the group elicited a range of opinions from across the international spectrum, and his early efforts in setting out a structure provided useful guidance for contributing delegations. We also acknowledge his effort in taking the difficult step of drawing together summary views in his Chairman's paper. We think that the Chairman's paper, the working papers contributed by delegations, and the list of issues suggested for consideration in the report of the Working Group provide a solid foundation for continuation of this work next year and for a detailed and relevant set of guidelines.

Australia's primary goal for the Commission's work on nuclear-weapon-free zones is an outcome in keeping with the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) decision on principles and objectives, that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned, enhances regional and global peace and security and contributes to the ultimate objective of achieving a world entirely free of nuclear weapons.

We would also like to thank the Chairman of Working Group II, Sudjadnan Parnohadiningrat, for his conscientious efforts. Australia is a supporter, but not a main proponent, of the convening of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. Here last year, I noted that we were concerned to ensure that the session would have adequate preparation, would have the best possible story to tell in terms of disarmament achievements, and would provide a balanced and forward-looking framework for future concrete disarmament undertakings.

Setting the objectives and agenda for a fourth special session on disarmament acceptable to all delegations has posed a considerable problem for the Commission. The Chairman's informal consultations [illegible] range of possible options for an agenda [illegible] session on disarmament. In keeping with [illegible] a rolling three-item, three-year [illegible] should conclude its deliberations [illegible] fourth special session on disarmament next year. In any case, the special session cannot be convened without consensus on its agenda and its objectives. In Australia's view, the proponents of a fourth special session on disarmament need to make more determined efforts to bridge the gap between the extreme and unrealistic positions adopted by a small minority of delegations at this year's session. We agree completely with those who have said in Working Group II that it is quite unnecessary to prioritize the issues for a fourth special session on disarmament in advance. It is likewise pointless to insist on the value of the first special session on disarmament: delegations are entitled to go into the fourth special session with their own views on the currency of the outcome of the first special session.

Australia took a keen interest in the work of Working Group III. We wish to thank its Chairman, Mr. Michael Hoey, for his persistence and understanding in tackling this somewhat unfamiliar subject. His paper, annexed to the Working Group report (A/CN.10/1997/CRP.5), sets out useful "guidelines for the guidelines" we will be elaborating in our future work on this item. Some differences of view have emerged, but this is an extremely important field and we consider it essential that the Disarmament Commission overcome these differences and demonstrate its relevance to the present reality of the carnage of conventional conflicts.

For this reason, we wish to emphasize the need to focus, as we agreed to do by consensus in adopting our agenda, on General Assembly resolution 51/45 N on consolidating peace through practical disarmament measures, and in particular on paragraph 1 of that resolution. It calls for a consideration of practical disarmament measures: demobilization, reintegration, demining and conversion. It also calls for consideration of restraint over production and procurement. The emphasis is particularly, but, as the resolution itself says, not exclusively, on small arms and light weapons. The resolution itself thus supports all issues which delegations

have proposed should be considered under the item including illicit trafficking, transparency and others. Exclusion of any issue, including humanitarian issues, is not justified now that the agenda item has already been adopted, although there is obviously a need to approach carefully issues which are outside the usual expertise of the Commission.

My delegation strongly hopes that the work of each of our Working Groups will continue in a purposeful way next year.

I would like to express Australia's heartfelt appreciation for the attentive and gracious manner in which you, Sir, have chaired this year's session. Your encouragement of the work of the Working Groups made a very positive impact on the progress made this year. Finally, I would like to thank the Vice-Chairmen of the Commission, the officers of the Secretariat and the interpreters for their conscientious and dedicated support of the work of the Commission.

Ms. Wang Xiaolin (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): At the outset, Mr. Chairman, the Chinese delegation would like to congratulate you on the positive results we achieved at this session under your guidance. We appreciate your outstanding diplomatic skill and wealth of experience. The Chinese delegation also thanks the other Commission officers, the Chairmen of the three Working Groups, the Director of the Centre for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Davinic, and the Commission secretariat for their contribution. We express our appreciation to delegations for their cooperation and flexibility.

New to our agenda for this year were items 4 and 6, "Establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned" and "Guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N". Working Groups I and III, on those two items respectively, held thorough discussions, laying the groundwork for further discussions over the next two years. I thank the Chairmen of those two Working Groups: Mr. Abdelkarder Mesdoua of Algeria and Mr. Michael Hoey of Ireland.

Working Group II, on a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, continued its work on the basis of last year's discussions. Although no consensus has been reached on this item, some progress has been made. We thank the Chairman of the Working Group, Mr. Sudjadnan Parnohadiningrat of Indonesia, for his efforts.

China has always attached great importance to the work of the Disarmament Commission as an important multilateral organ for the consideration of disarmament questions. The Commission should be enabled fully to play its role. China wishes to join other countries in active efforts to strengthen and improve the work of the Commission.

I wish finally to thank the conference officers, interpreters, translators and other members of the Secretariat staff.

Mr. Kervers (Netherlands): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union, to share with other delegations our preliminary assessment of this year's session of the Disarmament Commission. In its opening statement, the European Union expressed some concern about the status of the Commission. We did so in the light of its failure in 1994 and 1995 to reach agreement on any item on the agenda. The Union also mentioned as an encouraging development that during its 1996 session, the Commission was able to adopt by consensus a set of guidelines for international arms transfers, and expressed the hope that this year the Commission would live up to the expectation that it can fulfil a useful role as a United Nations body engaging in in-depth deliberations on specific disarmament issues.

Looking back at the three weeks behind us, I can say that the Disarmament Commission certainly did engage in in-depth discussions on all three substantive items on its agenda. Two of these items were entirely new, and a lot of useful exploratory work has been done in both cases, laying the foundations for discussions in the coming years and hopefully leading to the adoption of agreed guidelines. On the other hand, none of the three working groups was able to adopt more than a procedural report and, even then, did so with considerable difficulty. The European Union is concerned about that development, and therefore urges all delegations to approach next year's substantive session in a more constructive and flexible spirit.

In particular, the European Union would like to give a brief assessment of each of the three Working Groups.

Working Group I, on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned, has

in its first year been able to make an inventory of all the issues involved. This could already be qualified as a positive result, in view of the political, technical and legal complexities of the issue. Also, a first attempt has already been made to identify topics for further discussion. This might be helpful in structuring our discussions next year. Although the European Union would have hoped that more agreement could have already been reached on these topics, they provide a useful basis for further work. The European Union hopes that on this basis delegations will work constructively next year towards real progress on this issue.

The European Union regrets that Working Group II has not been able to reach consensus on the objectives and agenda for the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV). All through the debate the European Union has continued to try to bridge the different opinions on this issue by providing elements for SSOD IV's objectives and agenda which could command consensus. As has been said many times before, this is an essential condition before SSOD IV or meetings of its Preparatory Committee can take place. If a useful SSOD IV is to take place, delegations have to be more forthcoming than so far has been the case. The European Union calls on all delegations to show the necessary flexibility if the United Nations Disarmament Commission returns to this subject next year.

Working Group III, on guidelines on conventional arms control, has been very productive. Its Chairman has produced a paper which could form the basis for the development of guidelines in this field. This issue has been under consideration for only the first time this year, and it is clear that attention will have to be given to a number of concerns voiced by Member States on the scope and other elements of substance of this complex item. Taking this into account, the European Union considers that the Chairman's paper is well-balanced and provides a good basis for concrete progress next year.

A more procedural concern of the European Union is the time allocated to the Disarmament Commission. This year the session is over three weeks long. Taking into account that especially during the first two weeks the meetings of the working groups by no means used the precious time allocated to them, we should seriously consider whether sessions of the Disarmament Commission could not be shortened without this being at the expense of the substantive debate. At the very least, the Disarmament Commission should not last longer than three full weeks.

Finally, I would like to convey to you, Mr. Chairman, the European Union's appreciation for the way in which you presided over our work. You have personally contributed to the agreement on the reports of all three Working Groups, by no means an easy task. This appreciation is also extended to the Chairmen of each of these Working Groups for their untiring efforts in trying to reach agreement. Finally, we thank the Vice-Chairmen, the Rapporteur and the United Nations Secretariat for their valuable contributions.

Mrs. Arce de Jeannet (Mexico) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The delegation of Mexico would first like to express its deepest appreciation to you, Mr. Chairman, for all your efforts, as well as to the Chairmen of the three Working Groups, who constantly endeavoured to bring our work at this session to a successful conclusion.

The delegation of Mexico regrets that no consensus has been reached at this session of the Disarmament Commission on the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. Our differences on identifying objectives and agenda items for the special session have shown a lack of political will on the part of some delegations to make progress in the efforts of the international community to abolish nuclear weapons. This continues to be a priority for the majority of non-nuclear-weapon States. This priority has been duly reflected in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

The delegation of Mexico believes that the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice of 8 July 1996 has given us a new legal basis to challenge the threat, the use and the very possession of nuclear weapons. The delegation of Mexico supports the unanimous opinion of the International Court of Justice on the obligation to carry out in good faith and conclude negotiations aimed at nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.

The delegation of Mexico is prepared to pursue discussions and negotiations on the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, whose agenda will cover all disarmament issues, but with priority being given to the subject of nuclear disarmament, as the threat that nuclear weapons pose to the survival of mankind has not been eliminated.

Mr. Danesh-Yazdi (Islamic Republic of Iran): I would like to thank, through you, Mr. Chairman, the

representative of Ireland for his words of sympathy to my delegation on the tragic earthquake that jolted the eastern part of my country on Saturday, 10 May. As the Commission is aware, this very unfortunate incident has caused tremendous damage to the infrastructure and has inflicted huge losses of human life. I will certainly convey these messages of condolences to my authorities.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere appreciation and gratitude to those Members of this Organization whose Governments and organizations have expressed their sympathy and condolences to our Government and people or have volunteered to render humanitarian assistance to the people affected by the earthquake. We greatly appreciate these formidable humane gestures.

Mr. Laptsenak (Belarus) (*interpretation from Russian*): We would like to join in the congratulations extended to you, Mr. Chairman, and to express our gratitude for your conduct of the work of this session of the Disarmament Commission.

This session was not a simple one, with two new items on the agenda and intensive consultations. Of course, we could not do as much as many in this room would have liked, and we still have a lot of work to do. The merit of this session of the Commission is that it laid the foundation for ongoing, major, cooperative work on the part of all delegations. It is important that the Commission confirmed the principle of consensus as the basis for its work which will make it possible for us to have good conditions for our future work.

We welcome your tireless efforts, Mr. Chairman. During formal meetings they helped us take a consistent and organized approach to the items on the agenda for this session; during informal consultations, your presence greatly helped us to attain general agreement. We highly appreciate the efforts and work of the Chairmen of all three Working Groups, namely, the representatives of Algeria, Ireland and Indonesia.

The documents submitted in the Working Groups offer great assistance and input, which will contribute to the continuity of the work of subsequent sessions of the Disarmament Commission. We are pleased to say that the delegation of Belarus had an opportunity to make its own contribution and submitted a working paper.

Special words of thanks go to all the staff of the Secretariat, who, throughout these days, have actively worked together with us to achieve specific, concrete results for this session of the Disarmament Commission. Our thanks go to all the conference officers, interpreters and translators. We hope that next year, strengthened by the results of this session, we will be able to work productively and effectively on attaining concrete results.

Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Allow me to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your election and on the outstanding manner in which you have been guiding the work of this Commission. After the intensive efforts of the three Working Groups and the outstanding work of their Chairmen, the Commission is concluding today with positive results.

We would like to extend our condolences to the Islamic Republic of Iran for the loss of lives and serious damage it has suffered.

Although this is the first year these items have been under discussion, numerous concrete ideas have been put forward both on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones and on the control and limitation of conventional weapons, giving these subjects a solid component of content.

Discussion of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, though this item is being considered for a second time, clearly showed the difficulties that still exist in starting the work to be carried out by the Preparatory Committee in order to bring that special session into being in the few years that remain before the end of this century.

For a great number of reasons, the Republic of Cuba believes in the tremendous importance of the Disarmament Commission. It would like to refer to one of the most important international instruments in this field: the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction.

In the recent past, Cuba has been subject to several bacteriological aggressions. No one can forget the introduction into our territory of cane blight, of African swine fever, of blue tobacco mold, and of the terrible epidemic of dengue haemorrhagic fever, which took the lives of 100 of our children.

Therefore, and given its firm and solemn commitment to its duties and obligations under the

Convention. Cuba has argued for providing it with a binding verification mechanism. Recently, work has been done to try to establish such a mechanism, and it will be one of the fundamental issues to be decided at the conference of the States parties at the end of this year.

At the end of March 1997, the Government of the Republic of Cuba, in accordance with internationally agreed measures for confidence-building, informed the Secretary-General and the United Nations Centre for Disarmament, of the presence of *Thrips palmi karay* in its territory. The Government notified the Food and Agriculture Organization as well, requesting technical and financial assistance to combat this pest. This insect, which is difficult to diagnose, is a polyphagous phytophagan that infects and causes severe damage to practically all crops and is resistant to a great variety of insecticides. Particularly in its larva stage, it can survive being dropped from high altitudes. It propagates within a field and spreads into neighbouring ones, mostly through the movement of seedlings, fruits and vegetal material, including topsoils. It also spreads by aerial means. It is resistant to temperature changes. There are reports that it is a vector of viruses, among them one that causes leaves to turn brown.

For these reasons, in various sources, including a document entitled "Report of the Subgroup for Investigation of Claims of Use or Escape of Agents Which Constitute Biological or Toxic Weapons", which was issued on 29 February 1996 by the Federation of American Scientists, *Thrips palmi* is included among the invertebrates that could come within the purview of the Biological Weapons Convention.

At present, *Thrips palmi* is found virtually throughout Matanzas and La Habana provinces, in two municipalities of Cienfuegos Province, in some municipalities of Pinar Del Río Province and on Isla de la Juventud. In spite of the emergency measures that have been taken to combat it, which have included the purchase of costly insecticides, positive results have not been achieved.

On 21 October 1996, at 10.08 hours, the crew of flight CU-710 of Cubana de Aviación observed a fumigation aircraft Model S2R, with license number N3093M of the civilian aircraft registry of the United States of America, flying at an altitude of 10,000 feet in the Girón air corridor over western Cuba. It was operated by the State Department of that country; was coming from the Patrick Air Force Base of the United States Air Force, in Cocoa Beach, Florida; and was bound for Grand Cayman. Intermittently, the plane was sprinkling or spraying unknown substances over Cuban territory.

The air controller of the Cuban flight made contact with the United States aircraft and asked whether it was having any technical problems. The pilot answered no. He was also asked what type of aircraft he was flying, and answered that it was a single-engine AY-65. That conversation is on tape.

On 26 December 1996, the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Affairs presented a note of complaint to the United States Interest Section in Havana regarding the incident, urging the United States to take appropriate measures to ascertain what had taken place. On 12 February 1997, the United States Interest Section in Havana gave the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Cuba its reply, stating that on the day of the incident, the pilot of the United States plane had, during his flight, seen a Cuban commercial airplane flying below, and as he was not certain of having been seen,

> "following caution and safety procedures, and with the purpose of securing a positive visual contact, the pilot used the 'smoke generator' of his aircraft, in order to indicate its location".

The aircraft in question is used by the United States Department of State in the battle against drug trafficking. It is used to destroy fields and is equipped to spray aerosols, liquid particles and solid particles. It is not known if it is equipped with a smoke generator. The response of the pilot of the United States aircraft to the Cuban air controller confirmed that there was no fuel or oil being released or leaking. From a technical point of view, the story of a "smoke emission" is implausible and contradicts the conversation with the pilot, and it is not in accordance with the normal procedures established for such situations. Moreover, the pilot of the Cubana de Aviación plane attests, on the basis of his visual observations at the time and his prior experience as a fumigation pilot, that the emission from the United States plane was not smoke but other substances.

There exists information regarding experiments conducted by the United States in which biological agents were dumped from considerably higher altitudes than those observed in this case.

Thrips palmi is an insect indigenous to Asia. It is found in some areas of the Caribbean, including Haiti, the Dominican Republic and Jamaica; but until now it had

been unknown within Cuban territory. Its appearance some 600 kilometres from the eastern part of Cuba, the area closest to those countries, is rather suspicious in itself.

Bearing in mind the place where the unknown substance was released, it can be established that the most risky area for infection is a zone covering 15 to 20 kilometres to the west and 20 to 25 kilometres to the east of the Girón air corridor, although the whole territory of Matanzas Province is considered a probable infected zone. The investigation was able to demonstrate that these zones match those actually infected both by the primary and secondary outbreaks.

Considering the insect population found in the zone of primary focus, the investigation estimated the beginning of the plague to date back to three or four previous generations. The beginning of the plague can therefore be pinpointed to the date when the United States aircraft flew over this area.

Representatives present can find additional and detailed information in General Assembly document A/52/128.

On 6 May, a State Department spokesperson confirmed the existence of that flight, the time it took place, the Cuban territory over which it flew, and that it was an aircraft used by the State Department in its anti-drug campaign to destroy crops. Apparently, the State Department is using its own smoke generator while claiming, in a ridiculous argument, to be unaware of these irrefutable facts. I wish to ask the representative of the United States in this room if he is able to deny a single one of the events I have described.

An analysis of the facts and the results of the investigations allow us to link with great certainty the appearance of *Thrips palmi* in Cuba to the release on 21 October 1996 of an unknown substance by an aircraft of the United States State Department. There is reliable evidence that Cuba has once again been subject to biological aggression.

The Chairman (*interpretation from Spanish*): Before we close today's meeting and the Commission's work at this substantive session, I should like to extend our deepest sympathies to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the disaster that befell his country a few days ago.

Statement by the Chairman

The Chairman (*interpretation from Spanish*): Once again, the Commission has had three substantive items on its agenda, on which it has had three weeks and a day to deliberate. The organization and progress of our work have been supported by the tireless and patient efforts of the Chairmen of the Working Groups and the Secretariat and by the active participation of delegations.

The items on the Commission's agenda at this session were, as usual, entrusted to three working groups, whose Chairmen displayed great leadership, dedication and professionalism in their work. I therefore wish to express to each of them — Mr. Abdelkader Mesdoua of Algeria, Chairman of Working Group I; Mr. Sudjadnan Parnohadiningrat of Indonesia, Chairman of Working Group II; and Mr. Michael Hoey of Ireland, Chairman of Working Group III — my most sincere gratitude and thanks.

As the Commission is a universal body entrusted with the consideration of various issues related to disarmament, the atmosphere and problems experienced by other forums that consider similar issues are naturally reflected in its work. Despite this and the normal differences that arise in the discussion of such complex issues, we can assert that the climate which prevailed throughout our deliberations was that of a frank, sincere and constructive dialogue on the various items.

The dynamism of our discussions and the results of the 32 meetings of the Working Groups are reflected in the 30 documents introduced by delegations or groups of countries — an average of almost one per meeting. It is obvious that the early preparation of working papers greatly helped the Commission to function efficiently and to obtain results flexibly. Furthermore, I would reiterate that the documents prepared by the Chairmen of the Working Groups will be valuable contributions to the work of the Commission at future sessions.

As to the organization of our tasks, we can say that the simultaneous convening of the meetings of the Working Groups could weaken the universal character of the Commission's work. In the future, it would be advisable for the Commission whenever possible to avoid holding simultaneous meetings of its working groups.

Before concluding, I wish to convey my gratitude to all the Vice-Chairmen of the Commission; to our Rapporteur, Ms. Genevieve Hamilton of Australia; and to all representatives for their contribution to the work which the General Assembly entrusted to our Commission at this

session. I also wish to convey special thanks to the Centre for Disarmament Affairs and its Director, Mr. Davinic. We further thank the Secretary of the Commission, Ms. Cheryl Stoute of the Centre for Disarmament Affairs, as well as Mr. Timur Alasaniya, Mr. Mohammad Sattar and Ms. Carolyn Cooper — also of the Centre for Disarmament Affairs — for their outstanding professionalism and dedication in the various Working Groups.

At the same, we express our thanks to the interpreters, conference officers and all those who have contributed to the work of the Commission at this substantive session.

Closure of the session

The Chairman (*interpretation from Spanish*): I declare the 1997 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission closed.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.